



THE WHITE FOREST.

BY FREDERIC REMINGTON.



FROM the mid-winter mist and mush of New York it was a transformation to us standing there in the smoking-room of the Château Frontenac at Quebec, looking down across the grand reaches of the St. Lawrence, where the ice ran in crashing fields through the steaming water of the flood-tide. It was a cheerful view from a cheerful place, though the frost was on the pane,

and the wood-work popped with the cold. Down in the street the little Canadian horses, drawing their loads, were white with rime, while their irrepressible French drivers yelled at each other until we could hear them through the double windows. There is energy in this fierce Northern air.

"Why Florida in winter? Why not Quebec?" said the old Yale stroke.

"Yes, why not?" reiterated the Essex trooper.

But the coziness of the château did not suggest the seriousness of our purpose. We wanted to get out on the snow—to get in the snow—to tempt its moods and feel its impulses. We wanted to feel the

nip of that keen outside air, to challenge a contest with our woollens, and to appropriate some of its energy. Accordingly we consulted a wise mind who sold snow-shoes, blankets, moccasins, and socks, and he did a good business.

"Shall we dress at St. Raymond or in the château?" said my companion, mindful of the severity of convention in New York, as he gazed on the litter of his new garments spread out on the floor of our room.

"We will dress here, and leave so early that Quebec will not be out of bed until we are away; but if Quebec were awake and on the streets, Quebec would not turn its head to honor our strangeness with a glance, because it would see nothing new in us;" and dress we did. We only put on three pairs of socks and one pair of flannel-lined moccasins, but we were taught later to put on all we had. As the rich man said to the reporter, when trying to explain the magnitude of his coming ball, "There will be ten thousand dollars' worth of ice-cream," so I say to you we had forty dollars' worth of yarn socks.

We had bags of blankets, hunks of fresh beef and pork, which had to be thawed for hours before cooking, and potatoes in a gunny sack, which rattled like billiard-balls, so hard were they frozen. We found great amusement on the train by rattling the bag of potatoes, for they were the hardest, the most dense things known to science.

The French drivers of the burleaus who deposited us at the train took a cheery interest in our affairs; they lashed the horses, yelled like fiends, made the snow fly around the corners, nearly ran down an early policeman, and made us happy with the animation. They are rough children, amazingly polite—a product of paternalism—and comfortable folks to have around, only you must be careful not to let them succeed in their childish endeavor to drive their horses over you. Anyway, they cheered us off through the softly falling snow of that early winter morning, and made us feel less like strangers.

At St. Raymond were the guides and little one-horse burleaus all ready for the trip to the "bush," or at least for the fifteen miles, which was as far as sleighs could go, up to old man O'Shannahan's, which is the first camp of the club. There

were nearly four feet of snow on the ground, so that the regular road between the fences was drifted full, compelling the *habitants* to mark out another way with evergreen trees through their fields.

Far apart over the white landscape are set the little French cottages, with their curved roofs. They are so cozily lonely, and the rough hills go up from the valley to further isolate them. Coming along the road we met the low hauling-sleds of the natives, who ran their horses off the road into the snow half-way up their horses' sides; but the sledges were flat, and floated, as it were. Picturesque fellows, with tuques, red sashes, and fur coats, with bronzed faces, and whiskers worn under their chin, after the fashion of the early thirties. The Quebec *habitants* don't bother their heads about the new things, which is the great reason why



THE OLD YALE STROKE.



THE ESSEX TROOPER.

they are the most contented people in America.

The faithful watch-dog barked at us from every cottage, and, after the manner of all honest house-dogs, charged us, with skinned lips and gleaming eye. We waited until they came near to the low-set burleau, when we menaced them with the whip, whereat they sprang from the hard road into the soft snow, going out of sight in it, where their floundering made us laugh loud and long. Dogs do not like to be laughed at, and it is so seldom one gets even with the way-side pup.

At O'Shannahan's we were put up in the little club cabin and made comfortable. I liked everything in the country except the rough look of the hills, know-

ing, as I do, that all the game in America has in these latter days been forced into them, and realizing that to follow it the hunter must elevate himself over the highest tops, which process never became mixed in my mind with the poetry of mountain scenery.

We essayed the snow-shoes—an art neglected by us three people since our boyhood days. It is like horseback-riding—one must be at it all the time if he is to feel comfortable. Snow-shoes must be understood, or they will not get along with you.

Bebé Larette laughingly said, "Purty soon you mak de snow-shoe go more less lak dey was crazee."

Having arranged to haul the supplies into the "bush" next day, we lay down for the night in the warm cabin, tucked in and babied by our generous French guides. The good old Irishman, Mr. O'Shannahan, was the last to withdraw.

"Mr. O'Shannahan, what do the French say for 'good-night'?"

"Well, som' o' thim says 'Bung-sware,' and som' o' thim says 'Bung way';" but none of them, I imagine, say it just like Mr. O'Shannahan.

With the daylight our hut began to abound with the activities of the coming day. A guide had a fire going, and Mr. O'Shannahan stood warming himself beside it. The Essex trooper, having reduced himself to the buff, put on an old pair of moccasins and walked out into the snow. The New Jersey thermometer which we had brought along may not have as yet gotten acclimated, but it solemnly registered 5° below zero.

"Bebé, will you kindly throw a bucket of water over my back?" he asked; but Bebé might as well have been asked to kindly shoot the Essex trooper with a gun, or to hit him with an axe. Bebé would have neither ice-water, rifle, nor axe on his pious soul.

I knew the stern requirements of the morning bath, and dowsed him with the desired water, when he capered into the cabin and began with his crash towel to rub for the reaction. Seeing that Mr. O'Shannahan was perturbed, I said,

"What do you think of that act?"

"Oi think a mon is ez will aff be the soide av this stove as to be havin' the loikes av yez poor ice-wather down his spoine."

Mr. O'Shannahan reflected and hunched

nearer the box-stove, saying: "It's now gaun a year, but oi did say a mon do mooch the loikes av that wan day. He divisted himself av his last stitch, an' dayliberately wint out an' rowled himsilf in the snow. That before brikfast, moind ye. Oi've no doobt he's long since dead. Av the loikes av this t'ing do be goan an, an' is rayparted down en the Parla-mint, they'll be havin' a law fer it—more's the nade."

After breakfast a hundred pounds of our war material was loaded on each toboggan. We girded on our snow-shoes and started out to break trail for the sledges. I know of no more arduous work. And while the weather was very cold, Mr. O'Shannahan nearly undressed

us before he was satisfied at our condition for bush-ranging. We sank from eight to ten inches in the soft snow. The raising of the snow-burdened racket tells on lung and ankle and loin with killing force. Like everything else, one might become accustomed to lugging say ten pounds extra on each set of toes, but he would have to take more than a day at it. The perspiration comes in streams, which showed the good of O'Shannahan's judgment. Besides, before we had gone three miles we began to understand the mistake of not wearing our forty dollars' worth of socks. Also we had our mocasins on the outside, or next to the snow-shoes. They got damp, froze into something like sheet-iron, and had a fine ice-



THE CABIN.

glaze on their bottoms, which made them slip and slide backward and forward on the snow-shoes.

After three miles, Bébé readjusted and tied my moccasins, when Oliver, the cook, who was a very intelligent man, mopped his forehead with his shirt sleeve, and observed:

"Excuse me, I t'ink you bettair go back dose cabain—you are not fix hup more propair for dees beesness. Ma dear fren', dose man een Quebec what sol' you dose t'ing"—and here his quiet, patient personality was almost overcome, this human reflection of the long Northern winter could not calm himself, so he blurted, in his peaceful way—"dose man een Quebec dey weare know not'ing."

We were in the light of a great truth—the shoes would not stay on—the thongs cut our toes—we had outlived our usefulness as trail-breakers, and we succumbed. The back track was one of my greatest misfortunes in life, but it was such a measly lot of cold-finger, frozen-toe, slip-down detail that I will forbear. My companions were equally unfortunate; so when we finally fell into the arms of Mr. O'Shannahan, he said:

"Ah, a great hardship. Oi will make that matter plain to yez."

The sledges had deposited their loads half-way up the trail, the guides coming back for the night.

Next morning the remainder of our stuff was loaded, and with renewed faith we strode forth. The snow-shoes were now all right, and, with five pairs of socks apiece—one outside the moccasins—the thongs could not eat our toes. We took photographs of our moccasins—unwholesome, swollen things—and dedicated the plates to Mr. Kipling as "the feet of the young men."

The country of the Little Saguenay is as rough as any part of the Rocky Mountains. It is the custom to dress lightly for travelling, notwithstanding the 20° below zero, and even then one perspires very freely, making it impossible to stop long for a rest, on account of the chill of the open pores. Ice forms on eyebrow, hair, and mustache, while the sweat freezes in scales on the back of one's neck. The snow falls from the trees on the voyager, and melting slightly from the heat of the body, forms cakes of ice. Shades of Nansen and all the arctic men! I do not understand why they are not all pillars

of ice, unless it be that there are no trees to dump snow on them. The spruce and hemlock of these parts all point upwards as straight as one could set a lance, to resist the constant fall of snow. If one leaned ever so little out of the perpendicular, it could not survive the tremendous average of fifty feet of snowfall each winter. Their branches, too, do not grow long, else they would snap under the weight. Every needle on the evergreens has its little burden of white, and without intermission the snow comes sifting down from the sky through the hush of the winter. When we stopped, and the creak of the snow-shoes was still, we could almost hear our hearts beat. We could certainly hear the cracking of the tobacco burning in our pipes. It had a soothing, an almost seductive influence, that muffle of snow. So solemn is it, so little you feel yourself, that it is a consciousness which brings unconsciousness, and the calm white forest is almost deadening in its beauty. The winter forest means death.

Then came the guides dragging their toboggans, and we could hear them pant and grunt and creak and slip; how they manage the fearful work is quite beyond me. Used to it, I suppose. So are pack-mules; but think of the generations of suffering behind this which alone makes it possible. The men of the pack, the paddle, snow-shoe, toboggan, and axe do harder, more exhausting work than any other set of people; they are nearer to the primitive strain against the world of matter than are other men—they are the "wheelers," so to speak.

The last stage up the mountain was a lung-burster, but finally we got to a lake, which was our objective. It was smooth.

"Let us take off these instruments of torture and rest our feet on the smooth going," said we, in our innocence, and we undid a snow-shoe each. The released foot went into the snow up to our middles, and into water besides. We resumed our snow-shoe, but the wet moccasins coming in contact with the chill air became as iron. Our frozen snow-shoe thongs were wires of steel. Our hands were cold with the work of readjustment, our bodies chilled with the waiting. It was a bad half-hour before the cabin was reached. We built a fire, but the provisions had not come up, so we sat around and gazed with glaring eyes at each oth-



THE HOT FINISH IN THE SNOW SHOE RACE.

er. The Essex trooper and I talked of eating the old Yale stroke, who was our companion, but we agreed he was too tough. I was afraid for a time that a combination might be made against me on those lines, but luckily the toboggans arrived.

The log cabin was seventeen feet square, so what with the room taken by the bunks, box-stove, our provender and dunnage, the lobby of the house was somewhat crowded. There were three Americans and five Frenchmen. The stove was of the most excitable kind, never satisfied to do its mere duty, but threatening a holocaust with every fresh stick of wood. We made what we called "atmospheric cocktails" by opening the door and letting in one part of 20° below zero air to two parts of 165° above zero air, seasoned with French bitters. It had the usual effect of all cocktails; we should much have preferred the "straight goods" at, say, 70° .

In the morning we began a week's work at caribou-hunting. It is proper to state at this interval that this article can have no "third act," for success did not crown our efforts. We scoured the woods industriously behind our India-rubber, leather-lunged guides, with their expert

snow-shoeing, and saw many caribou; but they saw us first, or smelled us, or heard us, and, with the exception of two "clean misses," we had no chance. It may be of interest to tell what befalls those who "miss," according to the rough law of the cabin. The returning hunter may deny it vigorously, but the grinning of the guide is ample testimony for conviction. The hunter is led to the torture tree. All the men, cook included, pour out of the cabin and line up. The "misser" is required to assume a very undignified posture, when all the men take a hack at him with a frozen moccasin. It is rude fun, but the howls of laughter ring through the still forest, and even the unfortunate sportsman feels that he has atoned for his deed.

Bebé Larette killed a young caribou, which was brought into camp for our observation. It was of a color different from what we had expected, darker on the back, blacker on the muzzle, and more the color of the tree trunks among which it lives. Indeed, we had it frozen and set up in the timber to be photographed and painted. Standing there, it was almost invisible in its sameness.

Its feet were the chief interest, for we had all seen and examined its tracks. If

one puts his hand down into the track, he will find a hard pillar of snow which is compressed by their cuplike feet; and more striking still is it that the caribou does not sink in the snow as far as our big snow-shoes, not even when it runs, which it is able to do in four feet of snow with the speed of a red deer on dry ground. In these parts the caribou has no enemy but man: the wolf and the panther do not live here, though the lynx does,



THE SERIOUSNESS OF FOUR FEET OF SNOW.



CARIBOU TRACK.

but I could not learn that he attacks the caribou.

From Mr. Whitney's accounts, I was led to believe the caribou was a singularly stupid beast, which he undoubtedly is in the Barren Grounds. For sportsmen who hunt in the fall of the year he is not regarded as especially difficult—he is easily shot from boats around ponds; but to kill a caribou in the Laurentian Mountains in midwinter is indeed a feat. This is due to the deathly stillness of the winter forest, and the snow-shoeing difficulties which beset even the most clever sportsman.

This brings to my mind the observation

that snow-shoeing, as a hunter is required to do it when on the caribou track, has the same relationship to the "club snow-shoe run," so called, that "park riding" does to "punching cows." The men of the "bush" have short and broad oval shoes, and they must go up and down the steepest imaginable places, and pass at good speed and perfect silence through the most dense spruce and tamarack thickets, for there the caribou leads. The deep snow covers up the small evergreen bushes, but they resist it somewhat, leaving a soft spot, which the hunter is constantly falling into with fatal noise. If he runs against a tree, down comes an

avalanche of snow, which sounds like thunder in the quiet.

I was brought to a perfectly fresh track of three caribou by two guides, and taking the trail, we found them not alarmed, but travelling rapidly. So "hot" was the trail that I removed the stocking from my gun-breech. We moved on with as much speed as we could manage in silence. The trees were cones of snow, making the forest dense, like soft-wood timber in summer. We were led up hills, through dense hemlock thickets, where the falling snow nearly clogged the action of my rifle and filled the sights with ice. I was forced to remove my right mitten to keep them ice-clear by warming with the bare hand. The snow-shoeing was difficult and fatiguing to the utmost, as mile after mile we wound along after those vagrant caribou. We found a small pond where they had pawed for water, and it had not yet frozen after their drink.

Now is the time when the hunter feels the thrill which is the pleasure of the sport.

Down the sides of the pond led the trail, then twisting and turning, it entered the woods and wound up a little hill. Old

man Larette fumbled the snow with his bare hand; he lifted toward us some unfrozen spoor—good, cheerful old soul, his eyes were those of a panther. Now we set our shoes ever so carefully, pressing them down slowly, and shifting our weight cautiously lest the footing be false. The two hunters crouched in the snow, pointing. I cocked my rifle; one snow-shoe sunk slowly under me—the snow was treacherous—and three dark objects flitted like birds past the only opening in the forest, seventy-five yards ahead.

"Take the gun, Con," I said, and my voice broke on the stillness harshly; the game was up, the disappointment keen. The reaction of disgust was equal to the suppressed elation of the second before. "Go to camp the nearest way, Larette."

The country was full of caribou. They travel constantly, not staying in one section. New tracks came every day into our little territory. We stalked and worked until our patience gave out, when we again loaded our toboggans for the back track.

At Mr. O'Shannahan's we got our bur-leaus, and jingled into St. Raymond by the light of the moon.



ICE-FISHING.